

Shane Black

From: Shane Black
Sent: Monday, March 07, 2016 2:47 PM
To: 'acraig@ALSDE.edu'
Subject: Athens City Schools

Importance: High

Andy,

Good afternoon! It was good to talk with you today.

Thank you again for the productive meeting last Wednesday. The Athens board very much appreciates the department working with us on these issues. I am writing to make sure that Athens understands the enrollment situation as it concerns its students that are located out of district. Please take a look at the following 3 points, and let me know if these correctly summarize our conversation with Dr. Bice last Wednesday. If not, let me know. We want to make sure that we have a clear understanding:

1. As you know, Athens, like many school districts, has a policy allowing enrollment of students from outside its school district. Athens has a good number of these students, but not as many as some systems. Many of these are students that attend school in the traditional fashion. Others, who attend the Renaissance School, attend in non-traditional ways, such as a blended model (for example, using online technology in combination with regular or irregularly-scheduled conferences). In both cases, however, these are all full-time students with a full course load, and the school system is fully responsible for state testing/reporting, accountability, special education, *etc.* These students are primarily located in the Tennessee Valley, but there are others scattered throughout the state. They are not enrolled in any other public school systems. (Dr. Holladay maintains that there can't be too many of those because of the logistical issues it presents.) Last Wednesday, we used a home-school student in Lawrence County, a student from Florence who no longer attends in Florence due to disciplinary issues, and a home-school student in Dothan as examples of these. The vast majority of these Athens students who are outside the Tennessee Valley area were not previously enrolled in a public school. (We understand that local practices differ across the state as to whether/how systems notify one another of these students (some do, some do not), but that systems don't need one another's permission to admit a student-- although if there is an inter-system transfer, it will necessarily involve withdrawing from one system in connection with enrolling in another.) Our understanding is that these full-time out-of-district Athens students will continue to be counted in Athens' ADM this year and in the future.
2. Athens is also open to what it calls "guest-enrollment students," or virtual students that are not enrolled in Athens full-time (they may or may not be enrolled somewhere else full-time), but they just take one, two, or three classes from Athens virtually. These are not full-time Athens students and would typically (though not always) receive services from some other school, public or private. An example of this might be where Athens serves as the virtual provider for a school district -- answering that district's need for a virtual program. Where Athens provides this service to students in another school district, Athens *must* have written agreements with the other district, to ensure that the lines of responsibility are discussed and any costs are spelled out. These students are not to be counted in Athens' ADM, and remain counted in the ADM of the school systems they attend.
3. We also discussed students who are enrolled full-time in Athens City but who also attend Marengo Academy in some capacity. These are full-time Athens students, with Athens being responsible for their state testing/reporting, accountability, special education services, *etc.* However, they may also be enrolled in Marengo Academy, a private school. The department is not comfortable with this situation, and has raised the concern

that by enrolling these students and providing them with education services, Athens might be indirectly assisting the private school in such a way as to violate federal law. The Department understands that Athens has spent funds to educate these students, but due to the above concerns, indicated that it would not yet make any decision as to whether to count such students for purposes of the 2016 ADM allotment.

For its part, Athens believed that educating these students was a positive as it was pulling them back into a public education pathway (and that it was the students' own choice whether or not to attend a private school in addition to this), *but* Athens does not want these actions to be the source of a problem for the Department or others. As such, Athens is willing to "pull back" with respect to this issue. With that in mind, Athens requests that the department count these students for purposes of the upcoming 2016 ADM allotment, but in the enrollment period for the next academic year, Athens will not enroll any full-time student into its Renaissance School unless that student first presents papers showing that, if he/she was enrolled in any public or private school, that he/she has *withdrawn* from such school. Let me know your thoughts on this approach.

Andy, please let me know if I have summarized #1 and #2 correctly, and then let me know your thoughts on #3.

Again, it was good to talk with you today. Thanks!

Shane

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